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ABSTRACT

The uneven but continuing emigration of Soviet Jews since 1972 has been brought about by government policies that are all but openly anti-Semitic. More than 80,000 of these refugees have settled in the United States, many in New York City. They come from a population that is highly urbanized and well educated. Most speak Russian but identify themselves as Jews, even though only a minority maintain active contact with their religion. Their history in the Soviet Union is long and complex, with recurring repression and, for much of their history, restriction within a "Pale of Settlement." Many of them have some knowledge of a second language that will be useful to anyone who tries to teach them English. The English instructor further benefits from an awareness of certain characteristics of Russian, such as the many differences in consonant sounds from English. (JB)

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Fact Sheet Series #3

The Soviet Jews

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Refugee Fact Sheet #3: The Soviet Jews

The purpose of the Refugee Fact Sheet Series is to provide background information on certain refugee groups that have recently arrived, and are still arriving, in the United States. Unlike the refugees from Indochina and the entrants from the Caribbean, these refugees have arrived in much smaller numbers: however, they still face many of the same problems with language, education, employment, and cultural adjustment.

Each Fact Sheet is divided into approximately five sections:

1. General Introduction
2. Cultural Background
3. Educational Background
4. Implications for Learning English as a Second Language (ESL)
5. Implications for Orientation.

The cultural background section of each Fact Sheet is the most inclusive; it contains information on the history, geography, language, religion, food, values and customs of the specific refugee group.

We wish to thank all of those without whose research and assistance we would not have been able to put this Fact Sheet on the Soviet Jews together. We are especially indebted to Bruce Leimsidor for reading and commenting on the preliminary drafts.

HIGHLIGHTS

Refugees

In 1972 the USSR began allowing emigration by Soviet Jews. Beginning at a rate of some 30,000 per year, the flow of those permitted to leave declined appreciably in 1974, but then underwent a steady increase through 1979. It has once again fallen off considerably, however. In recent years an increasing proportion of those Jews permitted to leave the USSR have chosen to resettle in the United States, primarily because they have relatives in this country. Jews leave the Soviet Union because of an overt government policy of anti-Zionism with general anti-Semitic repercussions. Jews therefore see opportunities that have been previously open to them being closed off, and foresee a limited future for their children.

In the U.S.

More than 80,000 have been settled in this country, particularly in New York City (about 45%). All have been placed in cities with active Jewish community agencies that provide resettlement services.

Soviet Jews

The 2,100,000 or more Jews in the USSR are largely an urban population, most heavily concentrated in Moscow, Leningrad, the Ukraine, and the republics along the western border of the country. While almost all speak Russian, they identify themselves quite explicitly as Jews. While only a minority maintain active contact with their religion because of Soviet suppression of religious activities and organizations, many Soviet Jews view themselves as a distinct cultural group. A large number are well-educated and many have held responsible (largely technical) positions. However, most of those who have been able to obtain higher education and responsible positions generally did so before the current wave of anti-Jewish feeling.

History

Large numbers of Jews have lived within the present boundaries of the USSR since 1400. They came under Russian rule in the late eighteenth century and were mostly confined to the western part of the country -- within what was called

the "Pale of Settlement" -- until World War I. Nominally liberated under Soviet government, Jews have been repressed at various times, and since 1970 official propaganda attacking Israel and Zionism has made them, so to speak, targets by association.

I. Introduction

At the time of the 1970 census, 2,100,000 Jews constituted .78% of the population of the USSR, but subsequent emigration has by now decreased their numbers.

Jews are the most urban of any Soviet ethnic group. In a country still 3/8 rural, only 4.5% of the Jews live in villages. The three largest Soviet cities, Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev, account for about 30% of the Jewish population, but only a little over 5% of the total population of the country. Since World War II, in fact, Kiev has been the most Jewish city in Europe, with a concentration that reached 12% at one time. The proportion of Jews is also high in the other large cities of the Ukrainian and Belorussian republics; the highest proportion of Jews in any major territorial division occurs in the rather small Moldavian republic (formerly Bessarabia, population about 4,000,000, 2.7% Jewish). It is also the only region in which Jewish population had been increasing at the time of the 1970 census.

The current increasing wave of Soviet anti-Semitism dates from approximately 1967. While the primary thrust of Soviet policy is towards the suppression of Zionism, what may have been originally conceived as anti-Zionism has inflamed historical anti-Semitic feelings within what is now the U.S.S.R. Traditional anti-Semitic texts dating from the time of the Czars have been reprinted with government sanction in government printing houses. There are widespread reports that Jews are routinely denied admission to institutes of higher education and denied positions of responsibility solely on the grounds of their ethnic background. Persecution has touched not only those who could be classified as dissidents or overt Zionists; large numbers of Jews suffer not only educational and professional restrictions but also other types of harassment.

In 1972 the Soviet government began to grant some exit permits. Then, for reasons unfathomable to outsiders (but apparently in part due to the desire to create a favorable impression abroad, to easily dispose of one source of discontent, and to satisfy the anti-Semitism of those who thought Jews held too many good jobs) Jewish emigration increased, then dropped off, then increased again gradually from 1974 to 1979. Through quirks of history and changes in political climate, Jews frequently obtained a better chance of emigrating than did any other disadvantaged group in the USSR.

While in the later years of the 1970's it was not difficult for Jews to gain permission to leave the Soviet Union, the process involved taking considerable risks and at least enduring social ostracism. In order to apply

for exit the Soviet Jew must present a letter of invitation from a party abroad; more recently the Soviets have accepted primarily letters coming from close relatives in Israel. Frequently these invitations are intercepted by the Soviet authorities and never delivered to the potential applicant. Once an invitation is submitted and application is made, the applicant is immediately relegated to a renegade status while it is pending; and, more than likely, loses his job or is transferred to menial work. Although by Soviet law the application must be acted upon within a few months, a considerable number are subjected to arbitrary delays. Extensive paperwork may be required, such as proof of having paid all outstanding bills. Eventually a person has to renounce Soviet citizenship for which a considerable fee is charged. Such renunciation prohibits him from staying in the Soviet Union or returning there on a permanent basis after he has left. Finally, provided with papers listing him as stateless, with an Israeli visa obtained through the Dutch embassy in Moscow, the refugee departs for Vienna.

In interviews (with some attempts of persuasion) Israeli representatives in Vienna sort out those with a true inclination to go on to Israel. Those wishing emigration to western countries are taken by train to Rome, where Jewish agencies aid them in the emigration process. The large majority of Soviet Jews choosing emigration to the west come to the United States, but significant numbers also emigrate to Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and a few go to Western Europe.

About 43% of the refugees who come to the United States are resettled in New York City, where nearly 40% of American Jewry still resides. Soviet Jews are granted refugee status and assigned alien registration numbers as refugees under the terms of the 1980 Refugee Act. In the normal course of events, the refugees are given the status of resident aliens after one year.

Although the number of Jews being granted exit permission by the Soviet authorities increased through the 1970's, the Soviet Union began to restrict emigration quite severely beginning late 1979. There is still a steady flow of Jews out of the USSR, but the rate of refusals on applications for emigration runs as high as 70% in some cities. Large numbers of Jews still wish to leave the USSR and it is expected that if they are granted exit permission, substantial numbers will come to the United States. As of mid-1981, more than 83,000 have relocated in this country.

II. Cultural Background

A. History: Pre-Russian

Some Jews within the boundaries of the USSR have a historic connection dating back to a fairly remote period. In fact, it has been documented that a largely Jewish ruling elite dominated the steppes between the Don and the Volga between 740 and 970 A.D. However, the main history of Soviet Jewry begins with the reign of King Casimir III of Poland (1330-1370).

He invited Jews, undergoing difficulties in Germany at that period, to settle within his dominions. In 1386 came the "Jagiellonian Union" of Poland with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Duke Vitautas, the ruler from 1392 to 1430, encouraged Jewish settlement in the "Lithuanian" parts of the combined state headed by his uncle. At the beginning of this period, these included all of present-day Belorussia and extended as far as Kiev; by the end they had temporarily reached the Black Sea. This action may be looked upon as an attempt to import a middle class, for the most part previously nonexistent in these regions. A single government structure united the two parts of Poland-Lithuania after 1569, and by this time it held the principal Jewish population of Europe. The northern half of Italy, parts of Germany, and Avignon were the only other Christian domains where Jews were allowed to practice their religion.

In 1648, Ukrainian peasants, led by Bogdan Khmelnitski's Cossacks, rose against the Polish gentry. Directed primarily at the landlords, a secondary target of the revolt was the Jews, who were considered in league with the Poles. For a dozen years Khmelnitski's army and other Ukrainian and Russian and even Polish irregulars rampaged through the Polish kingdom. They massacred 100,000 Jews and caused hordes of others to flee for their lives. A treaty in 1667 restored most of Poland's former territory. Kiev and the northeastern Ukraine became quasi-independent under Russian control.

Russian Expansion

In 1772 a weakened Polish state was forced to cede considerable parts of its territory to its powerful neighbors: Prussia, Austria, and Russia. The Russians acquired the area of northern and eastern Belorussia around Vitebsk and Mogilev, together with a bit of eastern Latvia. The large Jewish population of these new territories was looked upon as a threat by the government of the Empress Catherine II. Finally, at the beginning of 1792 an official policy was adopted, which had apparently been the practice for the preceding 20 years: Jews were forbidden to move from these formerly Polish provinces into the rest of the Russian Empire. This was the beginning of the concept of a "Pale of Settlement" to which Jews were to be confined. The Second

Partition of Poland in 1793 added to Russia most of central Belorussia and the northern Ukraine between the Dnepr and the Dnestr, and around 300,000 additional Jews. In the following year a line was drawn clear across Russia expanding the Pale to include, in addition to the territories from the two Partitions, the part of the Ukraine gained from Poland in 1667 and the acquisitions from Turkey in 1783 and 1792. This included all but the northeastern part of the eastern Ukraine; that is, the area around Kharkov. The Third Partition gobbling up the remainder of Poland, followed in 1795, bringing under Catherine's rule Lithuania, western Belorussia, and the Volhynia region of the northwestern Ukraine -- and of course even more Jews to be bottled up in the Pale.

It is worth noting that the Jews were excluded from most of the dominantly Great-Russian speaking regions. They were allowed to settle in Ukrainia, Belorussia, Lithuania, Romanian-speaking, or Polish-speaking areas.

In the territorial redistribution that followed the Napoleonic Wars, the Russian Czar was assigned the Kingdom of Poland, with nearly half of the Polish population of that era -- about 3,000,000 Poles and 300,000 Jews. Poland, especially at first, was governed more liberally than Russia proper, and conditions for Jews never became as onerous as in other Czarist territories. For this reason there was a flow of Jews into Poland from the rest of the Pale, which amounted to a refugee movement at times when the Czar undertook repressive measures.

Czarist Century

After the stabilization of Russia's European frontier in 1815, the problem of regulating the somewhat unwieldy Russian Empire was the primary concern of the government. This was particularly true of the reign of Nicholas I, 1825-55. One of his first measures against Jews was to bar them from a 30-mile belt in border and coastal areas, not only as residents but even as traders. The communal self-management allowed to Jews in Poland was abolished in 1843. A special program of military conscription was instituted in order to separate Jewish recruits from Judaism -- suggested, perhaps, by the de-Christianized Janisaries of the Turkish Empire.

The reign of Alexander II, 1855-81, relaxed measures against Jews. Permission to settle outside the Pale was extended first to wealthy merchants, then to those who had completed higher education (notoriously difficult for Jews to secure at that time), to skilled craftsmen considered important in the Russian cities, and to those who had fulfilled the 25 years of military service then required of conscripts.

After 1881, however, an anti-Semitic attitude characterized the government. In 1882 Jews in the Pale were barred from villages and the ownership of agricultural land. Pogroms became frequent in cities both inside and outside the Pale, and were generally felt to be condoned by the state. Many of the Jews living east of the Pale were from time to time forced to return there, particularly in 1891. According to Czarist Russia's only census, in 1897, all but 300,000 of 5,000,000 Jews lived within the confines of the Pale.

The principal response to worsening conditions was massive migration to the United States, eventually bringing well over a million Jews from Russia to these shores -- 125,000 in the peak year of 1906. Zionism also gained a following, and modern secular writing in Hebrew began to appear. Many Russian Jews were involved in the political ferment of the times, leading to the formation of the revolutionary (and anti-Zionist) Bund in 1897.

In 1914-1916, fearing their disloyalty, the government moved 600,000 Jews from border areas to points farther in the interior.

Between Wars

In 1917, about a month after the Provisional Government was established, it declared the legal equality of Jews with all other Russian citizens. After the October Revolution, a Bolshevik commission decreed that Jews were a nationality; somewhat uncharacteristically, Lenin accepted this classification, although it went contrary to his own opinion that a nationality must have a territory. The following year the Soviet government outlawed anti-Semitism. A number of prominent Bolsheviks were of Jewish origin, and, by the end of the civil war, the sympathies of Jews were generally Red.

After World War I, nearly half the prewar Jewish population ended up in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, or Romania.

Released from residence restrictions, many Jews within the Soviet Union migrated to the large industrial cities -- particularly to Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev. A cultural movement developed, focusing on the Moscow Yiddish Art Theater and producing a large number of books and journals in Yiddish. The Soviet anti-religious policy made traditional Jewish education impossible, since religious instruction to any group of people under the age of 18 was strictly prohibited by law. While secular Jewish culture in Yiddish was tolerated, Hebrew was looked down upon as tainted by religion and Zionism.

In 1928 a strange experiment in the Birobidzhan region began. Along the Chinese border, 200 to 400 miles from the Pacific, the Soviet government set up a Jewish national region. The seriousness of official intentions for

Birobidzhan appeared questionable, however, due to the fact that the government refused to admit refugees from Naziism who, in 1939, appealed to join the 30,000 Jews then settled in the region. In the main, the government sought to develop agriculture there, but somehow a kolkhoz near the Amur never came to share the allure of a kibbutz near the Jordan.

In 1932, for reasons of internal security, the USSR began requiring that all citizens possess an "internal passport", which, among other things, states the bearer's "nationality". Since then, all Jews must carry papers that identify them as such, and this has made it much easier to discriminate against them.

By the time of World War II, about three-quarters of the 3,000,000 Soviet Jews still lived in areas that had formed part of the Pale of Settlement. When the German troops attacked in 1941, there was a mass exodus to the east, including (in particular) Soviet Jews and Jewish refugees from Poland and other countries overrun by the Nazis. Of the 20,000,000 Soviet war dead about 1,000,000 were Jews: the exterminated; those who died in the hardships of evacuation; civilian casualties of bombing, shelling, and strafing; and large numbers killed fighting in the Red Army. During the war, the anti-religious stance of the government was considerably relaxed, and Jews as well as others met fewer obstacles to practicing their religion than at any other time since 1917.

1945 to Present

After the war, evacuees tended to return to the western parts of the USSR, so that even today about 40% of the country's Jews are in the former Pale.

Soviet policy backed the original 1947 UN resolution for the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab areas, but opposition to Israel soon appeared to be an avenue to influence with Arab countries. It was clear that Soviet Jews welcomed the creation of the state of Israel, and this sympathy came to serve as a basis for questioning their undivided loyalty to the USSR

Events that followed, however, seem to have stemmed directly from Stalin's own paranoia.

In 1949 there was a purge of Yiddish authors and other Jewish intellectuals, a halt to Yiddish cultural expressions in Moscow, and a disappearance of works by Jewish authors from public libraries in the Soviet Union. At the beginning of 1953 came the bizarre announcement of the alleged discovery

of the "doctors' plot" -- whereby a group of nine doctors, seven of whom were Jewish, had supposedly planned to poison Stalin and other high-ranking Soviet officials. However, the threat of another Jewish purge evaporated with Stalin's death in March 1953.

After his death, there followed a period of de-Stalinization which was a substantial benefit to Jews. The relaxation is symbolized by the 1961 publication of Yevgeniy Aleksandrovich Yevtushenko's poem Babiy Yar, a poignant expression of sympathy with the sufferings of the Jews.

Under Krushchev, renewed restrictions on religion were introduced. Primarily it was the Russian Orthodox Christians who were harassed by having "unnecessary" churches closed, but obstacles were also put in the way of Jewish congregations.

Israel's Six-Day War of 1967 seems to have marked a turning point in Soviet policy both at home and abroad. A hard-line opposition to Israel and to open expression of Jewish solidarity characterized the next few years. By 1970 the "International Zionist Conspiracy" had joined the U.S. and China as one of the three bugbears of internal Soviet propaganda. Jews perceived this as anti-Semitism and a signal for the closing of doors that had been previously open to them. Some began to press for the opportunity to emigrate to Israel. In 1972, perhaps as a gesture to world opinion, the Soviet government began to issue exit permits to those with letters from relatives inviting them to join them in Israel. At first that is where most refugees went, but since 1978 a majority (by now nearly 80%) of those with visas for Israel have chosen instead to try to get to America. The emigration of Jews quickly became self-reinforcing: the government responded to the loss of trained manpower by more restrictive (unofficial) quotas on Jewish admissions to higher education; this increase in discrimination made more Jews anxious to emigrate.

For the present-day Soviet government, letting refugees go seems to have value as a safety valve for releasing dissidence -- more than for compensating for the strain it puts on other parts of the social system -- but of course the Kremlin might have an overnight change of policy at any time.

B. Geography

The Soviet Union has the largest area of any country in the world, so not surprisingly it contains a tremendous variety of geographical features and climatic zones. The most varied parts, however, tend to be near the edges, and large portions have an appreciable uniformity.

If we imagine a line that passes a bit to the north of Leningrad and Kazan and another that passes a bit to the southeast of Kiev and Kazan, we would cut out a wedge that includes a great deal of the Jewish population and has a high degree of similarity in topography and climate. Once we exclude the Carpathian Mountains and the coast of the Baltic, this is a region without exceptional features, but consisting of parts of what geographers call the East European Plain (with many swamps and lakes) and the Central Russian Uplands. Precipitation here ranges from twenty to forty inches a year, more in winter than in summer, and is normally regular and adequate for agriculture. Summer temperatures averaging in the upper 60's are quite uniform. Winter temperatures average in the teens, but are punctuated by the influx of Arctic air bringing cold spells during which temperatures drop to -40° (the notorious "Russian winter"). In the Ukraine, within as well as outside the wedge, low pressure systems moving across the Black Sea bring periodic winter thaws not experienced farther north.

The wedge area has a short growing season by U.S. standards. Even Kiev is north of any part of the contiguous 48 states. The typical crops are rye and potatoes and some buckwheat; the vast wheatlands of the USSR lie outside this region.

C. Employment

As already noted, Jews are most concentrated in the highly industrialized urban areas of the USSR. They are most likely to be employed as technicians, office workers or lower-level management. Among "blue collar" jobs, they are often skilled craftsmen. A considerable number are teachers, writers or graphic artists. In fact, they are found in numbers above their ratio to the whole population in most academic, intellectual or artistic lines of endeavor. (They are not, for nearly the last generation, however, likely to be employed where they might have access to information the government wishes to keep from the outside world.)

It is as musicians that Jews have been most conspicuous in Soviet society, providing a truly amazing proportion of pianists and string players.

As a rule Jews are more comfortably situated financially than Soviet citizens in general. It is estimated that one Jewish family out of ten owns a private automobile -- a prime status symbol in the USSR - as compared to about one out of twenty for the country as a whole.

D. Language

The language of Soviet Jews is, in general, Russian.

Yiddish developed among Central European Jews and is written with the Hebrew alphabet. It is an offshoot of German, which was the home language of the vast bulk of the Jewish community until the 1920's. Over half of the older generation grew up speaking mainly Yiddish, but in the big cities most have by now turned to Russian as the language of daily life. By the 1959 census only 21% of Soviet Jews reported Yiddish as their mother tongue. Since then the rate of decline has been less catastrophic; 17.7% reported Yiddish on the 1970 census. (The 15,000 Jews remaining in remote Birobidzhan are presumably the most thoroughly Yiddish-using portion of Soviet society.) A survey of immigrants to the U.S. reported 15% were able to speak Yiddish.

Jews coming from the Ukraine -- at one time running as high as 69% of those entering the U.S. -- seem to be primarily Russian-speaking rather than Ukrainian-speaking. To understand this, it is necessary to realize that nearly all the major cities of the Ukraine have a sizable Russian population. In them are found Russian-language schools as well as Ukrainian-language schools, and the former are considered superior. As a subtle aspect of Russification, all other nationalities, including Ukrainians, are encouraged to attend the Russian schools. In the cities, Ukrainians generally have an adequate knowledge of Russian -- a closely related Slavic language. It is natural to assume that most Jews in the Ukraine must have some command of that republic's language, but apparently typically as an adjunct to their native Russian.

For mastering English, whatever language background beyond Russian a refugee has -- even if marginal -- is likely to be helpful. Yiddish, as a Germanic language, is in many ways closer to English than are Slavic tongues. Moldavian/Romanian is somewhat intermediate. A knowledge of even the closely related Ukrainian or Belorussian provides some useful language perspective and some features of pronunciation more akin to English. A mere smattering of Hebrew may open insights into some linguistic features foreign to Russian.

Study of a foreign language in the Soviet Union begins in the fifth grade. Theoretically each student has a choice of what language to learn. English is the language stressed by official policy. In some parts of the country it has been difficult to provide enough teachers to shift from the previous dominance of German, but the urban schools attended by most Jewish children are likely to be those best supplied with English teachers. English is the choice

associated with upward mobility and particularly the ambition to enter any engineering or scientific field. Most refugees who were educated in recent years have had classroom exposure to English. Their command may fall short of an ability to communicate actively, but certainly provides a foundation to build on. Considering the repression of the study of Hebrew ever since 1921, most present-day Soviet Jews are more familiar with English than with Hebrew; this may be a minor factor influencing the desire of so many to settle in the U.S. rather than in Israel.

Even those who have taken German, French, or Spanish in school will have become familiar with the Latin alphabet, and will have been exposed to linguistic features characteristic of West European languages in general.

E. Religion

The government-sponsored denigration of religion has been fairly effective in the case of many Soviet refugees that come to North America. Particularly for the youngest generation, the major positive association Judaism carries with it is a sense of community with the state of Israel.

As one might expect, there is a wide spectrum of degrees of affiliation with Judaism among refugees. In making the choice as to whether to continue to their nominal destination in Israel or to seek admission to the U.S., families more familiar with Jewish tradition are more disposed to want to become Israelis. For this reason among others, current immigrants to North America may be more secularized than are Soviet Jews on the average.

The most enduring attachment to tradition is the practice of joining -- or at least observing -- the dancing and singing that take place in the streets outside the synagogues on Simkhat Torah. (There is a remarkable parallelism to the way in which largely secularized Russian Orthodox Christians will still appear on Easter Eve at midnight to take part in the festive atmosphere around the churches without needing to actually enter the building.)

Judaism as practiced in the Soviet Union is almost exclusively Orthodox, with varying amounts of Hasidic influence. There is nothing resembling the Reform and Conservative strains known in the West.

F. Arts

The artistic expression of the Jewish community was traditionally in literature, theater and music, and not the visual arts. There were at one time a number of Yiddish writers of considerable stature, of whom the most widely known was Sholem Aleichem (the source of Fiddler on the Roof).

Since the 1949 suppression, there has been relatively little that could be called specifically Jewish artistic expression in the Soviet Union, although, as mentioned before, there is a strong tendency for Jews to follow artistic lines of endeavor and to be prominent in music, theater and film production.

G. Names

Russian names have three parts: (1) the person's given name; (2) a "patronymic" derived from the father's given name; and (3) the family name inherited from the father. A man's patronymic typically adds -ovich to his father's name; a woman's adds -ovna: Davídovich, "David's son"; Davídovna, "David's daughter". (Some patronymics end in -yevich/-yevna: Isáyevna, "Isaiah's daughter", Lázaryevich, "Lazarus' son". A father's name ending in -a is treated a bit differently: Ilyich, "Elijah's son", Ilyínishna, "Elijah's daughter", from Ilyá, from "Elijah".

Family names ending in -ov, -ev, or -in have feminine forms ending in -a when applied to women: Litvínova, Moisyéyeva, Ionina. Also -skiy changes to -skaya: Abrámskiy--Abrámskaya.

The natural response of older Soviet citizens when asked who they are is to state their given name and patronymic; younger adults will usually reply with their given name and family name as people in the West tend to do; children would offer only a given name or nickname.

There is a fairly standard set of nicknames corresponding to most given names (e.g., Dánya, "Danny"; from Danila, "Daniel"), but individual variants also occur. Close acquaintances normally address each other by their nicknames.

H. Social Structure

Jews in the Soviet Union maintain extensive kinship networks. They almost always live within easy walking distance of at least one set of relatives, and they visit back and forth a great deal among the households that are related to them. Insofar as there is a Jewish community in the larger cities of the USSR, it would seem to be constituted by the web of these visiting patterns.

Losing this support must be a major strain in leaving, and finding acquaintances to visit with informally in this country to replace that support is an important part of adjustment.

Family size in the European parts of the Soviet Union has been decreasing, particularly in the largest cities. It is currently fashionable for couples to have only one child. There are considerable financial pressures against more, and the generally crowded state of housing is also a factor.

III. Educational Background

The refugees are by and large well-educated. They have tended to have better educational opportunities than most Soviet citizens and to have availed themselves of them.

Soviet education is somewhat rigid by American standards. It concentrates largely on "basics" and relies more on rote learning. At the higher levels it is intensive and rather narrowly specialized for most students. Education is free, but of course what education one receives is largely governed by what the state judges to be its manpower needs.

The refugees have been active participants in a highly developed technological society. Many have skills and training that can readily be used in the West, once problems of initial adjustment are behind them and their command of the language is adequate.

IV. Implications for Learning English as a Second Language (ESL)

A. Pronunciation of Consonants

Some English sounds are quite unlike anything in Russian and may continue to be pronunciation problems long after they can be produced when full attention is concentrated on them. Noticeable among these are the th-sounds, voiced as in then and voiceless as in thin. There is nothing in Russian comparable to the ng of thing; even before k as in bank, Russian uses a dental n-sound like ordinary n, rather than the ng type heard in English words. (Yiddish has ng-sounds.) There is no w in Russian; v is traditionally substituted. (Ukrainian and Belorussian do use some w-like sounds.) Another sound foreign to Russian is h; use of the Russian kh (x) in English is usually understandable but sounds strange. (Yiddish uses h; Ukrainian has an h-sound, albeit sounding a bit strange to English ears in some words.) Different dialects of English have different types of pronunciation where we write the letter r. Russian r is most like Scottish r and is not in the least like the American variety.

All instances of Russian p, t, k are like the English sounds only as found in certain circumstances: sport, captain, stool, Atkins, scandal, active. These are "unaspirated", whereas the ordinary initial sounds as in post, toast, coast have a strong breathing or "aspiration" after the release of the consonant and before the vowel takes over.

There are some pitfalls for learning the pronunciation of English j, sh, zh (the z of azure). The Russian sounds readily regarded as analogous -- dzh, sh, zh -- have a quite different sound quality (the lips are protruded and the tongue is further back in the mouth) in such examples as:

dzhas	джаз	'jazz'
shok	шок	'shock'
zhest	жест	'gesture'

In at least the preferred standard of Russian pronunciation there are sounds with a quality closer to that of English sh and zh, but these are always long sounds:

vyeshchi	вещи	'things'
pozzhe	позже	'later'

What is needed is the short duration of the one set with the quality of the other.

In spite of the spelling, and related forms with the same stem, only the voiceless consonants occur at the ends of Russian utterances. That is, in final position, for v one pronounces f,

" z " " s
" zh " " sh
" b " " p
" d " " t
" g " " k

(Ukrainian and Yiddish have final voiced consonants at the ends of words.)

Consonants in sequence, including those of adjacent words, must be either all voiced or all voiceless (except that v may follow one or more voiceless consonants). This is why one can hear Russian diplomats on news broadcasts discussing Vezd Berlin. The English pronunciation of the borrowed Russian word "vodka" with dk is impossible in Russian; Russians say votka although there is a d in the spelling.

B. Vowel Contrasts

Russian has a basically simpler vowel system than English has. Different English vowels will sound, from a Russian point of view, like variants of the same vowel when it is pronounced under different conditions. This may lead to difficulties both in hearing and in pronouncing English vowels.

Confusion of this sort arises between the vowels of sin and seen. It arises even more between look and Luke, but the latter contrast is relatively unimportant in English.

The Russian o in tot ("that") is not far removed from the vowel of English taught, while the o in tyotya ("aunt") is closer to the vowel in tote, so these sounds can be confused.

The Russian e in syel ("sat down") can be a reasonable approximation to the vowel of English sell, but in syel't' ("herring") the vowel is more in the range of English sail. (In état "this" the e may sound more like the vowel of English at).

Russian a as in sat ("garden") is very close to the common American pronunciation of sot; in palatized surroundings the a in syat' ("sit down!") is more like sat. The Russian sound most like the vowel in English hut is the a in the syllable before an accent, so that ambróziya ("ambrosia") begins much like English umbrella.

C. Articles

Russian gives no consistent grammatical recognition to the contrast between definite expressions and indefinite ones that English distinguishes by use of the definite and indefinite articles the and a/an. On the basis of the Russian patterns, one would say in English things like:

I found key.
Push button!
Turn pancakes!
Please pass butter.
Dog took off after rabbit.

(whether a rabbit newly introduced to the context or the rabbit already referred to). Becoming sensitive to the English categories is often a lengthy process for Russian-speaking learners, and teachers may often want to give extensive and repeated practice using the articles. (Yiddish, Hebrew and Romanian, all make use of a definite article.)

D. Copula

No present tense of the verb to be is used in Russian to express simple equivalence, as:

Oryol sil'naya ptitsa. The eagle is a powerful bird.[1]

Neither is the verb to be used with adjectives or with adverbial expressions in the present tense.

Fsyo yásno. Everything is clear.

On dóma. He is at home.

E. Pronouns

When a conversational situation has made it clear what persons or things are being discussed, pronouns are usualiy omitted in Russian. Thus, in answer to a question equivalent to: "Has your friend waked up by now?" one might answer:

Spit yeshchó. He is sleeping still.

When a Russian verb that is normally transitive appears without an object, the existence of a specific object, which would have to be expressed in English, is implied:

Gnyot. He is bending it.

The characterizing use of a verb without an object in English, as in: "It is bending", requires a quite different form of expression in Russian.

Gnyótsa. It is bending itself.

Since verbs of this form would often be translated with a reflexive pronoun, and are in fact often called "reflexive", the learner may be led to such un-English expressions as: "The stick is bending itself."

F. Passives

Russian indeed does make use of a passive voice which can quite readily be compared with the English passive:

Fsye myestá búdut zányat'i. All places will be taken.

The conditions under which passives may be used in Russian are much more limited, however, than they are in English. In a wide variety of circumstances where an English passive is appropriate, Russian requires rather the use of the so-called "reflexive" verbs. As in the example in the previous paragraph, where we could say in English: "The stick is being bent," there is

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[1] Underlining in English translations means that there is no word in the Russian example that corresponds to that English word.

the danger of forcing a reflexive translation. To say: "Russian teachers are needed here," the natural type of expression in Russian would be:

Zdyes' tryébuyutsa rúskiye uchityelyá. Russian teachers require themselves here.

G. Present Time

In general when we describe in English what is going on at the time, we use, as appropriate, is, are, or am and a present participle:

My nephew is fixing his car.

We use the simple form of verbs for what is generally the case:

My nephew fixes cars.

In Russian, as in many languages, the simple verb forms serve in both types of situations:

Spit. Спит. He is sleeping now.
He sleeps late every morning.

As a further trap in English for speakers of many languages, including Russian, the simple forms of certain verbs -- ones which do not involve any obvious activity -- do serve to describe actual present conditions:

Those animals look fierce.

Now he's home, my nephew misses his college friends.

This means trouble.

With learners that remember the basic uses of "rides" and "is riding" one still has to caution against analogously saying:

This bottle is containing medicine.

Russian uses the simple present form to indicate activity concurrent with that expressed by another verb as well as activity current at the moment of speaking. English, and particularly written English , employs a "sequence of tenses". The natural form of expression in Russian would translate literally:

He then saw that the boy is sleeping,

where English normally requires "was sleeping".

H. Word Order

English imposes rather strict requirements on the order of words if they are to convey the intended meaning. Russian is a highly inflected language in which the endings of words to a great extent reveal their function in a sentence. Associated with this is a considerably greater freedom in the order in which words can be put; different orders do not as often change

the basic meaning but only provide different nuances of emphasis and relation to what else has been or will be said.

Thus in Russian no difference except order is involved in the following examples, whereas we must recast the form of expression to change order in English.

On prichiníl mál'chiku vryet.	He did the boy harm.
On prichiníl vryet mál'chiku.	He did harm to the boy.
(literally occasioned)	

The subject is sometimes found in final position (see Section F., second example). A Russian background often makes for playing fast and loose with the requirements of word order in English sentence construction.

The "inverted order" typical of English questions is a particularly important signal in English that is unnatural from a Russian point of view. Trying to make questions using the order of subordinate clauses is likely, given the prevailing order of Russian questions with question words.

When they will get here?

What we can do?

A questioning intonation will produce a question in direct order:

You will wait?

This gives, however, a verification question, not the more usual basic yes-or-no question that requires inversion.

V. Implications for Orientation

By all accounts, one of the surprises facing Soviet refugees is coping with the flexibility of the American social system. In the USSR almost any problem that must be dealt with requires the use of one particular bureaucratic channel. It becomes mind-boggling to learn that in the U.S. there may be a dozen different agencies -- some public, some private -- that might in various degrees and different ways provide assistance in a given situation.

Probably most important to remember is that although Soviet Jews may preserve some of the traditions of Judaism, they are likely to be more secularized than many North American Jews and may not speak Yiddish or follow many of the traditional practices or customs.

Moreover, since they often held positions of high status in Russia -- many in professional or artistic occupations -- they may find it difficult to accept a job with less status, especially an entry-level job. In the USSR employment was assigned: "where the government puts me . . ." Soviet Jews arriving in the U.S. will need help in understanding the American system of upward mobility. When they do, most will find themselves obtaining better jobs in a short period.